

Ancient Histories and History Writing in New Rome

Traditions, Innovations, and Uses

DUMBARTON OAKS SYMPOSIUM, 5–6 MAY 2023

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History writing is a key site for the construction of ethical and political consciousness as well as historical memory. It allows individuals and communities to create and articulate their identity and positionality within the sweep of human history. In ancient Greece and the classical and medieval phases of the Roman Empire, histories not only recorded past events but either implicitly or explicitly told audiences how the past defined current communities and set moral and political agendas for future action. Different conceptualizations of the past amount to debates about who the authors thought they were, what was moral, and who their contemporaries ought to be. The study of traditions of historical writing is therefore an archaeology of civic identity, ethics, and politics.

This interdisciplinary symposium brought together scholars of ancient and medieval historical

writing to explore connections and interactions between ancient Greek, biblical, classical Roman, and medieval Roman histories. Authors writing histories in eastern Roman society interacted variously with earlier Roman and Greek histories, as well as biblical histories, to construct conceptions of their community's identities and relationships with the past. Rhetorical alignments signaled conformity with or breaking from previous strands with these complex cultural traditions. Our explorations of the various ways medieval writers used, adapted, distorted, or ignored earlier texts helped us understand the complexities and nuances of medieval eastern Roman culture, community identity, and politics. In turn, the study of medieval uses of the classical historiographical tradition yielded fresh insights into the ways medieval attitudes and decisions shaped the preservation and creation of the classical canon.

FRIDAY, 5 MAY

WELCOME

Thomas B. F. Cummins and
Nikos D. Kontogiannis

INTRODUCTION

Leonora Neville

FRAMEWORKS

Chair: John Duffy

*Changing Continuities: Eighth and Ninth Century
Reckonings with the Eusebian Revolution*

Jesse Torgerson, Wesleyan University

*Getting from Adam to Alexios: Roman History
Looks Back*

Leonora Neville, University of Wisconsin–Madison

HERODOTUS AND THUCYDIDES
IN BYZANTINE HISTORIES

Chair: Ioli Kalavrezou

*Mirroring Herodotus: Sources, Truth,
and Truth Effects in Laonikos Chalkokondyles*
Emily Baragwanath,
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

*The Clash of East and West: The Subversive Classicism
of Kritoboulos, the Biographer of the Turkish Sultan
Mehmet II (1451–1481)*
Scott Kennedy,
Bilkent University

POLITICS OF ROMAN ANTIQUITY
IN BYZANTINE HISTORIES

Chair: Dimiter Angelov

*Rewriting the Republic in Byzantium: Republican
History and Political Memory in Tenth-Century
Byzantium*
Christopher Mallan,
University of Western Australia

John Zonaras and the Fall of the Roman Republic
Jeffrey Beneker, University of Wisconsin–Madison

SATURDAY, 6 MAY

LIVES AND HISTORIES

Chair: George Demacopoulos

The Synaxarion of Constantinople as Historiography
Stratis Papaioannou,
National Hellenic Research Foundation, Athens

Symeon Metaphrastes and Plutarch's Lives
Noreen Humble, University of Calgary

*Historiography, Novel, Schedography: The Many Lives
of Xenophon's Cyropaedia in the Twelfth Century*
Aglæ Pizzone, University of Southern Denmark

HELLENISM IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Chair: Elizabeth Bolman

The Romanitas of "Hellenism" in Byzantine Art
Sarah Bassett, Indiana University

*A Preoccupation with Decline and Other Roman
Aspects of Byzantine Historiography*
Anthony Kaldellis, University of Chicago

FINAL DISCUSSION

Jeffrey Beneker